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EDUCATION and INFORMATION BULLETIN for BNI MEMBERS

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Justin Starts BNI Life with a £135,000 Contract!



WHAT A WHOPPER: Mobile phone specialist Justin Russell receives his 'giant' referral from photographer Howard Barnett at Leeds Moortown Chapter. Photograph courtesy of Howard Barnett, 1st Digital Photography.

10-minute presentations prompted the other to pass a six-figure referral at only his second meeting!

In fact, when photographer Howard Barnett of 1st Digital Photography, handed over his referral slip to Justin Russell of Premier Mobile, he had no idea of the size of contract which would be signed just a few days later – having experienced barely two hours of business, BNI-style, after joining just the previous week.

Equally, Justin never imagined it would lead to one of the biggest deals in his lengthy career as a mobile phone and data expert – in the shape of a three-year contract with the Springfield Healthcare Group worth in excess of £135,000.

He said: "I only joined Moortown Chapter in May this year so I was surprised when, just a few weeks later Howard – whom I'd only met at his inauguration the previous week – passed me a referral after listening to my 10-minute presentation and said he thought it might lead to something. In fact, he had referred me to Graham Lee, the healthcare group's executive chairman and to be honest I didn't think it would go anywhere.

"But I met Graham the following week and when I presented my proposals to him three days later, he surprised me by awarding me the contract on the spot, saying they were far better than he'd received from his existing provider Vodafone or the other major players."

It was the perfect re-introduction to BNI for Justin who was obliged to leave a Hull chapter several years ago when a new job meant he had to relocate home. He added: "I still remember how good BNI was the first time around when I gained £60,000 worth of business in 12 months, so when I changed jobs again and moved to North Yorkshire, the first thing I did was look for a chapter to join. Being given such a splendid start by Howard confirms I made the right decision."

Like Justin, Howard has quickly embraced BNI's Givers Gain philosophy and having raised his own profile as a result of passing such a lucrative referral, chapter colleagues are now doing their best to give him a similar flying start. •

Contact Justin on 07872 648442 and Howard on 07812 390568

Two of BNI's 'new boys' are celebrating a flying start to their membership of Leeds' Moortown Chapter, after one of their

Sally Chases a Referrals Record!

She could be heading towards a new BNI record for the number of referrals passed in a year, but you'd never know it, even after talking to Wolverhampton lettings agency boss Sally Lawson.

As Managing Director of Lawsons, the residential lettings agency she sent up 17 years ago when only just out of her teens – and now the biggest and busiest in the West Midlands – pragmatist Sally aims to distribute 10 referrals a week to her BNI colleagues, sometimes more, and says it's all down to sound planning and organisation which starts within her own 12-stong office team.

"If I'm going to be able to pass good referrals to my BNI colleagues, then both I and my staff need to know them well, and know exactly the sort of business they are looking for. So at each of our monthly staff meetings, held away from the office, we invite at least one of my chapter colleagues to give the entire team a 10-minute presentation on their business," she said.

"In addition, I invite members of the chapter's 'property circle' – those working with obviously related products and services – to come along to our offices on a regular basis and talk to my relevant managers about specific areas of mutual interest. We try to handle all aspects of property letting in-house, which means we take charge of our own conveyancing, legal issues, maintenance, marketing, accounting and so on, but of course we still have use outside resources so there are always business opportunities for my BNI colleagues to work with us."

In practice, most Villiers Chapter members have received referrals from Sally, even those not working in the property sector. "When you consider that nearly all chapters will have an IFA, bank manager, accountant and solicitor, not to mention a wide variety of building trades, craftsmen and artisans, it's not surprising that we've used the services of most of my BNI colleagues," she added.

Having passed nearly 200 referrals in the past six months alone, Sally was recently presented with a notable networker award and, thanks to the effectiveness of involving all her staff in learning about her BNI colleagues' businesses, she's aiming for a record 500 referrals in one year. And, while she doesn't expect to receive nearly as many business opportunities in return Sally added: "What they've lacked in quantity, they've made up for in terms of size. One successful referral a few months ago led us to a landlord with over 70 properties to let, and that's very good business for us."



Sally is keen to stress that becoming the leading residential lettings agent in the region did not happen by chance. "We've established solid procedures to maintain our reputation for delivering a first-class service, and this includes having the highest percentage of professionally-trained and qualified staff in the Midlands, gaining Investors in People accreditation, using the best computer software and office systems, and placing a strong emphasis on customer care. I take the same professional pride in my BNI membership, and trust the results speak for themselves." •

Contact Sally on 01902 428008.

You're a skilled craftsman working away from home when suddenly, the contract you were given becomes much bigger – requiring a variety of additional trades to meet a tough deadline. In most circumstances, work would come to a grinding halt as renegotiations took place and extra craftsmen were found. But, when you belong to BNI, a better solution is always at hand!

So it was for carpentry and joinery specialist Peter McNulty whose Herne Bay, Kent company, Pemax London Ltd was half way through a three-week contract to build and install bookcases in a new retail bookshop 70 miles away in Chertsey, near Guildford – when the client decided to extend the work to a major re-fit of both offices and book shop, demanding far greater resources.

and we were asked to supply and fit a new shop front with sliding glass doors. Somehow Derek managed to get it all done within three weeks, as well as meet other last minute demands to build extra facilities."

From his Canterbury chapter, Peter called in lighting specialist Keith Mottram (of Prewer & Orsborn lighting) to supplying new fittings for the whole building, while Simon Brown of Cantium Contracts, despite impossible deadlines and repeated changes of client specification, sourced and fitted a range of flooring from carpet tiles and vinyl planking to safety flooring and astro turf. Meanwhile, Steve Whiting of AWE Developments and a member of Viking Chapter, Broadstairs, added some spectacular decorative brick walling to the coffee shop, while the final cleaning contract was handled

by a new member of the Woking chapter – Debbie Weller from New Horizon Cleaning Ltd.

Peter added: "This job was a real challenge, not least because the brief kept changing and getting bigger, while our deadline stayed the same. Happily the book and coffee shop has now been open for two months and is doing much better than anticipated – probably because it has a decided 'wow' factor thanks to some superb craftsmanship which saw half a dozen of my colleagues share a valuable £200,000 contract. Without my BNI network it would have taken

Sharing £200,000: That's the Power of BNI

"When my client told me all the extra works he suddenly wanted carrying out, I realised there could be major delays unless I could quickly source a pool of specialist trades and get the much bigger job co-ordinated without delay. That's when I was reminded of the power of BNI and its fantastic business network. As a member of Canterbury Chapter I knew I could call on some of my own colleagues, but I also needed local support so I phoned one of Surrey's BNI directors, Richard Petty and he immediately arranged for me to visit two local chapters, Runnymede and Mole Valley," Peter recalled.

In next to no time, Peter had assembled all of the resources he needed. He said: "Nigel Green from the Runnymede Chapter stepped in to do a superb job of all the decorating and Derek Robinson from Mole Valley came to the rescue when the goalposts were moved again



much longer to complete – and almost certainly to far lower standards." ●

If you happen to be in Chertsey, then drop into The Chertsey Bookshop in Guildford Street, Chertsey and admire some amazingly creative, top quality work by BNI craftsmen.

Contact Peter McNulty on 01227 360936 or 07740 619511.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WITH THANKS:

SuccessNet is grateful to Jason Dodd Photography, Martin Gammon (Here & Now Photography) and Peter Dawes Photography (all BNI members) for their excellent and efficient work in providing the pictures for the front cover of this issue.

A £600,000 Loan? No Problem for Rob!

A NatWest Business Development Manager has just completed his first year with BNI by sealing a £600,000 deal that takes the bank's aggregated value of business from chapter referrals to well over £1 million in just 12 months!

Having already gained a variety of new customers through referrals from colleagues in Wolverhampton's Villiers Chapter, Rob Taylor (pictured right) was more than satisfied with his BNI membership even before he was passed a referral from the chapter's mortgage broker, Duncan Piper, to quote on a £600,000 land and property loan.

He said: "Duncan runs the Independent Mortgage Hypermarket but despite his considerable market knowledge, the client in question had been unable to find the right

deal from other lenders to close a significant land acquisition and property development deal. Although it took several months to finalise the arrangement, I am delighted we have now been able to help him proceed."

Before joining BNI, Rob had been a member of most other business networking organisations and business clubs, but none had produced either the tangible business results he's experienced through the Villiers Chapter, nor opened up such a powerful network of new business contacts for him.

Rob added: "It is great to be referred such sizeable pieces of business as my key role is to help businesses develop. Although obtaining new business is essential to me, the longer term benefits of BNI are just as important, especially the ability to create a superb



network of new contacts."

Ironically, his success in netting high value business for the Bank, has led to Rob's transfer away from Wolverhampton to take up a new role in NatWest - but he is so pleased with his year-long stint in Villiers Chapter that he has lined up his branch successor to take his place at BNI's breakfast table. He said: "It's obviously for the chapter and my replacement to decide whether he should succeed me in the group, but he knows how beneficial my membership has been and I'm sure he will want to continue the successful relationship I've enjoyed." ●

Contact Rob on 07786 174 429

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE DAFT, BUT...

Proving that you don't always have to take business seriously, are these members of two Hertfordshire chapters who marked their first joint chapter meeting by turning up for breakfast wearing a crazy – but creative – array of 'hats' to indicate their trade or profession.

The event was hosted by St. Albans' Chariots Chapter whose members had invited colleagues from the nearby Links Chapter at Harpenden to enjoy a joint networking breakfast – with the proviso that their guests wore hats to identify themselves and their occupations among the 60-plus attendees.



The resulting scenes were captured for posterity by Chariots' photographer, Ian Waldron who said:

"It was a huge success and, while a joint chapter event is far from unique, members had gone to quite extraordinary lengths to make their headwear distinctive, with many of the results making a lasting impression.

"In terms of business, it was a very successful meeting with a number of cross-

chapter referrals passed and new affiliations established, and we aim to stage a reciprocal visit to the Links Chapter before the year is out." ●

As Ian's pictures confirm, doing business BNI-style can be fun as well as profitable! All photographs courtesy of Ian Waldron Photography. He can be contacted on 0845 225 1771, or at: info@ianwaldronphotography.com

OUR LATEST 'GOLD STANDARD' TEAM

Thirteen UK members have joined BNI's prestigious Gold Club, after each introduced at least six new members to their respective chapters. They are: Carol Bunning (Posh Capter, Peterborough), David Chafer (Phoenix, Rotherham), Gary Chester (Professionals, Sheffield), Anthony Crotty (Westgate, Clonmel, Tipperary), Andrew Downie (Waterfront, Swansea), Russell Golding (Emmanuel, Cambridge), Rob Harvey (Villiers, Wolverhampton), Thornton Holmes (Thorpe Wood, Peterborough), Keith Jones (Dylan, Swansea), Andy MacKenzie (Corby), David Morton (Evolution, Glasgow), Steven Scott (Iomart, Glasgow) and Paul Webb (Eaton, Birmingham).

Our congratulations go to all of them – with a reminder that when you or any of your chapter colleagues receives a black badge for your recruitment successes, make sure you tell SuccessNet about it! ●

NEWS

All Roads Lead to KUALA LUMPUR

BNI's European members who want a share of the Far East's booming business markets are being advised to book their places at the second worldwide members' conference taking place in Kuala Lumpur next May.

Following the success of their first conference two years ago, organisers have again chosen the Malaysian capital for the two-day international members' conference – called simply KL08 – which will take place on 28th and 29th May, with the aim of fostering business opportunities in far eastern countries for the scores of UK and European delegates expected to attend.

Among the Conference highlights will be:

- Two days of high-powered presentations by leading BNI directors, among them Founder Dr Ivan Misner and UK national directors Martin and Gillian Lawson.
- Business master classes – topic-specific workshops led by BNI's top business gurus and motivational speakers.
- A glittering Awards Dinner with traditional Malay cuisine and entertainment.

- An international members' business and trade exhibition.

BNI's Malaysian national director Robert French said: "Our aim is to help members win business not just in Malaysia, but from other Asian countries that will be represented. China and India contain half the world's population and by 2050 they will be two of the wealthiest nations, offering huge business opportunities. Far Eastern companies are now looking for agents in the West, and Malaysia offers a safe gateway to these expanding markets."

He urged delegates to stay on in the capital after two high-octane days of networking, to enjoy the stunning sights of Kuala Lumpur. "It's an exciting, exotic city offering delicious food, amazing architecture and some great nightlife, so I hope UK members will combine good business with pleasure."

Delegates who book by 31 December will pay a reduced event fee of £124 (including lunch on both days and Gala Dinner) and everyone who books by the end of the year will go into a prize draw to win a free trip to the event worth up to £750. ●

For full information and booking details, visit www.bni-worldwide.com or call +44 (0)1227 728027.

LEE SEEKS PARTNERS FOR FAR EAST EXPORT DRIVE

One UK member is already well advanced with plans to 'export' his design, print and packaging services – and those of BNI colleagues – to Far Eastern companies looking to strengthen their commercial foothold in the British market.

Lee Taylor has been a member of the Jesmond Dene Chapter near Newcastle-upon-Tyne for barely six months but, in that time he has already used the strength of BNI's vast network resources in developing ambitious proposals through the Government's UK Trade & Investment organisation to win new overseas clients for his two year old Welbeck Design Consultancy.

He said: "As soon as I joined BNI, I recognised its value in terms of networking with other BNI members working in similar areas of expertise. Just one example of this came when I read in SuccessNet about Natalie Piper whose South London website design consultancy, Art Division, seemed to offer a perfect fit with our business. I called her up, jumped on the train, visited her Croydon chapter the following morning and then spent the day discussing how we could work together on bigger projects.

"It's early days in terms of this and other relationships we're developing with BNI members around the UK, but I'm certain it's going to produce mutual benefits – especially when it comes to winning larger clients like those we are chasing in the Far East," he added. "These are companies which are already exporting to the UK markets but whom I believe will be more successful if they work with UK design,



promotional and packaging specialists to make their products more appealing to European tastes. That's why I'm confident we can export to countries like China and Thailand – perhaps as a consortium of BNI design specialists."

A graphic designer, Lee (pictured above right) was introduced to BNI by a client and was so impressed with its impact on his business, that he arranged for another designer in his team, Amy Elliott, to join the nearby Morpeth Chapter. "To compete effectively in export markets, you have to be robust enough to withstand scrutiny by potential overseas clients, so I'm determined we will not be seen as a small North-East consultancy, but as part of a national team of specialists – hence my aim to form alliances with members across the UK," he added.

Lee is working closely with UK Trade & Investment to identify potential Far Eastern clients and conduct market research prior to first discussions with would-be customers. "At that stage I will be contacting BNI chapters in Thailand and China to identify suitable business partners so that we have strong representation both overseas and here in the UK. In today's global economy, you have to think big and fortunately BNI provides the perfect platform." ●

Contact Lee on 01670 523500.

HIGH FLIERS GALORE AS MEMBERS TAKE TO THE SKIES

BNI members have been taking to the skies to deliver the Giver's gain message in original – and eye-catching – ways. Here we feature two examples of our high-flying members, for whom networking appears to know no boundaries. If you, or anyone else in your chapter have been similarly creative, in the name of business of course, then tell SuccessNet about your exploits. You'll find our contact details at the foot of the back page.

Duo's One-to-One at 3,000 Feet!

Two intrepid members of Birmingham's Apollo Chapter have set what they think could be a lasting record, after conducting their one-to-one business session while soaring 3,000 feet above the Staffordshire countryside.

Matthew Barrett from The John Hughes Law Practice, and Nick Hargrove from Tamworth-based Clarke Signs (Midlands) Ltd are both keen microlight enthusiasts and, at the end of a recent chapter meeting while

discussing arrangements for a proposed 1-2-1 the following week, they decided to make it more memorable by holding their 'meeting' while flying high over their offices!

Nick said: "We both agreed it would be a novel way of holding a 1-2-1, and because we had to do more than the usual amount of preparation for our meeting in the skies, it actually made us both focus on each other's business activities and how we could help each other. The fact that we could have fun, and get plenty of fresh air while conducting our business chat, just added value to the session. It will be interesting to see whether any of our chapter colleagues now look for ways to upstage our 1-2-1 by coming up with even quirkier venues!" ●

Contact Nick on 01283 791592 or 07855 780274, and Matthew on 0845 130 2855 or 07939 118 871.



FLYING HIGH: Nick and Matthew get airborne

WREXHAM MEMBERS JOIN '2000 FEET' CLUB!

Eight members of Wrexham Chapter recently joined an elite "2,000 Feet High" club, after taking their networking to new heights while performing dare-devil aerial acrobatics in a glider high above the Shropshire skies.

Loop-the-loops and other stomach-churning aerobatics were the order of the evening as Wrexham's entrepreneurs mixed business with (dubious) pleasures, after being challenged to make their networking more stimulating by chapter colleague Dave Jones.

It was all in a day's work for Dave, an experienced instructor at the Midland Gliding Club on The Long Mynd, near Church Stretton who, when he's not soaring above the clouds, runs Wrexham-based financial consultancy, Independent Advice. He said: "Gliding gives you a sense of complete freedom, wonderful views, and it can be a surprisingly therapeutic experience, restoring perspectives and inspiring you to pursue new goals. I thought it would be a brilliant way for my chapter colleagues to network together more closely."

Accompanied by instructors, some of BNI's more intrepid novices like Peter Leslie from Oraica Ltd, even took over the controls for much of his flight. Peter, a web developer, said: "The take-off felt like you were

being catapulted into space. Flying a glider is an incredible experience and I definitely want to repeat it. The event was a great way of getting to know each other better!"

Retiring Chapter Director Penny Moorhouse from Brian Jones Auto Services added: "Newcomers to BNI can be assured that they don't have to perform a loop-the-loop to join us, but we do like our networking to be fun as well as business focused!" ●

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT: Wrexham member Peter Leslie sits in his glider watched by (left-to-right) Derek Platt, Mark Sanders (both from Midland Gliding Club), Jonathon Moore, and Richard Platt, also from the Club.



NEWS IN BRIEF

URSULA SNAPS UP TOP QUARTET

Members of Nottingham's Robin Hood Chapter know exactly where to turn for all of their creative needs, after the group's photographer Ursula Kelly scooped no fewer than four major awards - including the East Midlands Photographer of the Year - in the Master Photographers Association (MPA) Annual Print competition.

Ursula is now officially the Association's Fashion, Glamour and Avant Garde Portrait Photographer of the Year and, after also being awarded runner-up spot in the classic portrait category, she went on to take first place as contest's overall winner, receiving the John B Martindale memorial trophy. She said: "It's an incredible honour, since I was only accepted as a member of the MPA last February. I was nervous about having my work scrutinised by so many talented professional photographers, but absolutely thrilled and shocked to have done so well." ●

Contact Ursula on 0115 841 0153 or at: www.flukstudios.com

IT'S A 'GEM' OF A READ

SuccessNet has a rival for the attention of BNI readers in Milton Keynes, following the launch of a bi-monthly newsletter specifically for members of the town's four chapters.

Called 'Gemstones' to reflect the names of the chapters, Diamond, Amethyst, Ruby and Sapphire, the four-page newsletter is the creation of Diamond member, freelance writer Judi Whiting who researches and writes the material, and distributes the publication to all BNI members in the area. She said: "Contributions come from members and the rest I make up myself, using BNI news and events, reflecting topical issues of the day." ●

GUILDFORD GIRLS RACE FOR LIFE – AND CATCH £1,400

Guildford Chapter's 'girls' recently showed that their business dynamism is matched by their physical stamina, after forming a BNI team to take part in the Race for Life at Stoke Park, raising £1,400 (including Gift Aid) for Cancer Research UK. The team comprised Nikki Ferguson, Jackie Gardener, Amanda Walker and Ingrid Weel who commented: "We finished hot, sweaty and tired but feeling great. One of BNI's core principles is to work together, and we proved that teamwork can benefit not only our chapter colleagues, but those less fortunate who need a good team behind them." ●

WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHERE?

The Answers are all at Network Central

Need a pest controller in Portsmouth or a party organiser in Perth? Want to find a first aid trainer in Falmouth or chauffeur driven limousine in Cardiff? Then look no further than the improved Network Central database on BNI's new European website, where you'll find all the answers.

Further significant developments to the recently introduced Europe-wide website now mean that members and non-BNI members alike can easily and instantly locate the provider of almost any product or service, in any region where there are BNI chapters – safe in the knowledge that all of the businesses listed in Network Central are run by BNI members.

Listing the services and products of literally thousands of members throughout the UK and Ireland, Network Central enables anyone to locate almost any business they could conceivably require with just a few clicks of the mouse. So, to find any UK-based BNI members' products or service, just go to www.bni.eu/uk, click on the 'Members Area' tab and then click again on Network Central – to bring up the full directory, conveniently displayed in business categories with the option to narrow your search to any given part of the country.

Similarly, Irish members should go to www.bni.eu/ireland to view members' services across the whole of Ireland.



of potentially several businesses is likely to be able to offer you the best 'fit' for your needs, each listing contains a detailed description of the products or services offered, together with a 'Why Choose Us?' section, describing the business's individual strengths and background.

UK national director Gillian Lawson commented: "Having created such a comprehensive and powerful resource, it seemed only sensible to make it available to non-members as well, which means that every BNI member whose company is on the Network Central database, stands to gain additional business both from BNI colleagues and the general public – who are visiting the BNI website in increasing numbers, attracted no doubt by the knowledge that they will find high quality service and customer care." •

If your business details are not already on Network Central, the chances are you are missing out big time – so make sure you gain the full benefits from BNI's comprehensive database by registering your business now. Just log onto the website and you'll be guided through the registration process.

Once you've found the business(es) which meet your needs, you can directly access their individual websites, download relevant members' business cards and/or email your requirements. And, to help you decide which



FLASHBACK: From the big breakfast event earlier this year.

Get Ready for International NETWORKING WEEK

While BNI's UK and Irish regions are being encouraged to develop a variety of individual events to reflect local factors, every programme is expected to incorporate some or all of the following:

- Special chapter events to which other non-BNI business organisations and the local community's economic and political representatives will be invited.
- Joint chapter breakfasts each of which could bring together members of anything up to a dozen BNI groups.
- 'Big Visitors Days' when individual chapters will be urged to stage their largest-ever visitor breakfasts aimed at highlighting members' services to as many local businesses as possible.
- One-off joint networking events with other business groups such as chambers of commerce and trade, female-only networking groups and local economic forums.

National Director Gillian Lawson said: "We want this second international networking week to fulfill two main objectives: emphasising the importance of networking in today's business environment, and forging stronger links between geographically-related chapters, and between chapters and other business organisations. Every BNI region will have autonomy in staging those activities which local directors and members feel are most appropriate, but we expect all of them to raise BNI's profile and standing across different business communities." •

BNI will be 'going public' like never before, when chapters throughout the world mark the second International Networking Week in early February, staging a host of local and regional events aimed at creating stronger links with the rest of the business community.

Following the huge success of the first-ever international week earlier this year – most memorable in the UK and Ireland for the 'Big Breakfasts' that brought together hundreds of BNI members at each event – next February's weeklong programme (which begins on Monday, 4th February) will see the focus shifted more towards external activities involving the wider local business communities around each chapter (or group of chapters) as well as the general public.



MEETING OF MINDS AT THE JUNCTION...



SILVER START: Junction Chapter Director Parv Walling receives the Silver Celebrations award from Watford Mayor Dorothy Thornhill. Also pictured (from left to right) are committee members Barry Duttall and Greg Peachey, together with BNI Director Charlie Kenny.

Watford's newest and most centrally located chapter is aiming to become THE centre of local business, following launch events that have included visits by senior representatives from the local chamber of commerce – and receiving a top community award from the town's Mayor!

Heading for a 30-strong membership just six months after its launch, the Junction Chapter is the 10th BNI group to be launched in the area and, through the efforts of its core members, it has already become the focus of business development for the town's small and medium sized companies.

This was recognised when Watford's Mayor, Councillor Mrs Dorothy Thornhill visited the group to present members with one of only two silver awards granted by the Freedom Visionary Trust for their major voluntary contribution to the town's recent 'Celebration 2007' - aimed at bringing

Watford's different ethnic communities together – and for sponsoring a variety of follow-on community projects.

Founder member Dawn Ayres, a director of Bushey Hall Garage with a long involvement in Watford's economic development, sees the arrival of Junction Chapter as a landmark in the town's business growth. She said: "I'm certain that Junction will go big time and prove itself a key element in boosting the local business community. BNI's philosophy will provide the element that has been missing, bringing businesses together to work for each other. ●

For more information contact Dawn on 01923 815932 or Parv Walling on 01923 244486.

Meanwhile, Other Recent Chapter Launches Include:

Hammond (Tortworth, Avon), Isaac Newton (Grantham, Lincs), Kirklees (Cleckheaton, West Yorks), Moss Cottage (Ripley, Derbyshire), New City (Preston, Lancs), Orbital (Cannock), Orchard (Craigavon/Portadown, NI), Platinum (Dublin), Regis (King's Lynn, Norfolk), Ruby (Bury, Lancs), Summit (Dublin), Tendring (Clacton, Essex), The Royal (Eastbourne), Tower (Ormskirk/Maghull, Lancs) and Whitworth (Spennymoor).

In the Netherlands, three more chapters have been launched in recent weeks at: Bommen Berend (Groningen), Kanaalstreek (Stadskanaal) and Eemsland (Appingedam). ●

Peter is Dolphin's Century Maker!

Poole-based print broker Peter Westwood doesn't have much time for the common complaint from some members that it's difficult to get visitors along to their chapter. And, after bringing his personal total of guests to more than 100 in just three years, it's easy to see why.

In fact, this former director of Poole's Dolphin Chapter says it is easy to find visitors by following one easy rule: invite people whom you would like as your own clients – and tell them that if they come to breakfast with you, they are very likely to win new business for themselves!

A few weeks ago Peter was presented with a Notable Networker Award by incumbent chapter director Barrie Loring and BNI's executive director for Hampshire, Gavin Bain, since when he's already added more than half a dozen further visitors to his century tally.

His philosophy is remarkably simple. "I believe that in business we buy from people we like, and from people whom we feel have tried to help us. So when it comes to identifying potential visitors, I look at those people whose custom I would very much like to have, and whose products and services are likely to appeal to my chapter colleagues.

If you can see potential business for you or your colleagues, then they are the kind of visitors your chapter wants," he said.

"In practice it has often meant that my visitors have found ready and willing customers for their wares among my BNI colleagues, as a result of which – sometimes weeks or months later – they've come back to me whenever they've needed to buy print or related services. To my mind, that's a great example of Giver's Gain at work, based on building relationships rather than the hard sell."

Mark Bradley, the chapter's then Membership Co-ordinator is in no doubt that Peter's softly-softly approach has worked to everyone's benefit. He said: "Despite coping with the double blow of losing his wife through illness and a very substantial business through no fault of his own, Peter's professionalism and sheer hard work to strengthen Dolphin Chapter is a shining example to us all."

Peter, who now runs Authentic Colour Print Services, added: "The statistics show I've brought an average of three visitors every four weeks, so if I can increase this to one a week, it shouldn't be too long before I reach my double century – and it's in my own

business interests to achieve this!"

He is pictured below with chapter colleagues ready to strike out for his second century. ●

Contact Peter on 01202 532277, or at: www.authenticcolour.co.uk





THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT: Two of Runnymede Chapter's female members with plenty to smile about after seeing major upturns in their businesses are solicitor Deepa Veneik (left) and computer trainer Fiona Syrett. Photo courtesy of Runnymede member, Martin Gammon of Here & Now Photography.

BNI Lore Suits Lawyer (well, it would, after netting 600% rise in turnover!)

“So there I was in the summer of 2006 with a flash new law firm ready for business, new offices, new equipment, a trendy new logo, lots of energy and an open door...” said Surrey's latest hotshot lawyer. “The only problem was that not enough people were walking through it to let me demonstrate the wonderful services I could provide.”

Although she'd become a qualified solicitor years earlier, and was well known as a legal troubleshooter in the public sector and a college law lecturer, Deepa Veneik hadn't fully appreciated that running your own practice is a very different thing – requiring more than just professional ability. So, for the first few weeks of its life, ‘Surbitonlaw’ was unnervingly quiet.

“I soon recognised that I needed to market my new business – but how? First through my door was the lady selling Yellow Pages, but one look at her prices and the vast number of lawyers already advertising in the directory put me off. Then the lady from Thompson Local came to see me, and I turned her down for the same reason. I just didn't think it would be cost effective,” she said.

Deepa's breakthrough came a few weeks later when she took a call from someone needing urgent advice after his business partnership had turned sour. She said: “I was soon able to guide him through the process of getting out unscathed, but then he floored me by inviting me to breakfast. I thought ‘steady on, I've only known you a few hours’ but he explained he was involved with a group of local business people looking for a lawyer to whom they could pass business.”

She went along to the Runnymede Chapter in Chertsey, liked what she saw and commented: “I instinctively knew this was the group for me, so I joined just a year ago and haven't looked back.”

Not only did Deepa find business starting to flow into her practice within weeks of joining, but as a sole practitioner she also looked forward to the camaraderie of her Friday morning BNI breakfasts.

“Frankly, it became the high point of my working week,” she said. “I'd become part of a fantastically lively yet professional group of businesspeople who really do look out for each other. As well as seeing a huge upsurge in my business, it was so reassuring to be able to share business issues with people who'd experienced the same problems and had the answers.”

Last month, as she stood down from her stint as Secretary/Treasurer, Deepa was happy to announce that she had no hesitation in renewing her membership. “Why? Because in just 12 months, BNI has made my turnover rise by 600%, I've met lots of amazing people and get the chance to laugh while I'm doing business every Friday morning. I'd be mad to give it all up...” she added.

One of her Runnymede colleagues – and immediate successor as Secretary/Treasurer – is Fiona Syrett a computer trainer with Digital Unite Ltd, who joined the Chapter just three months earlier last year at a time when she had only enough clients to keep her occupied for three days per week.

“I provide one-to-one computer training and specialise in beginners & older learners and, like Deepa, I needed more business, quickly. Within months of joining BNI I'd gained enough referrals to provide work for five full days every week – a very welcome increase of 36%,” said Fiona.

Admitting that the only initially ‘scary’ aspect of joining the chapter was standing up and talking about herself and her business in front of the other members, Fiona added: “Even that quickly disappeared thanks to the excellent training offered to all members, and the genuine support we receive from each other. It has been such a breath of fresh air to me and my business this past 18 months, that I now tell everyone I meet about the virtues of BNI.” ●

Contact Deepa on 020 8399 8900 and Fiona on 01932 342788

Ashford Says 'THANK YOU' For 1,000 Referrals from One Member!

When Kent insurance broker Ray Johnson handed out six referral slips to colleagues at a meeting of his Ashford Chapter last month, he thought it was just another average breakfast meeting performance. But in fact, his latest half dozen referrals had established what is possibly a remarkable UK ‘first’ for this prolific Folkestone-based giver: a personal tally of passing at least 2,000 referrals since he joined BNI nearly 10 years ago.

Such is Ray's commitment to Giver's Gain that he had no idea he'd just reached this impressive personal milestone until he was told after the meeting by the chapter's new Membership Co-ordinator, John McHutchinson, that he'd just passed his 1,000th referral in the Ashford Chapter – which he only joined in the summer of 2003, after a five year spell with Folkestone Chapter.

He said: “In my early days I used to keep a record of all the referrals I'd passed but there were so many that eventually I stopped counting. When I joined Ashford Chapter, they'd just introduced the new BNI referral logging system so I know that they've been keeping an accurate record, but I wasn't aware of reaching any particular landmark until John congratulated me afterwards.

“However, when I thought back over my 10 years in BNI, I reckoned I'd been passing an average of four referrals a week and, since I've rarely missed a chapter meeting and always sent a substitute with referrals on the occasions when I have, it must mean I've handed out more than 2,000 in total.”

Ray acknowledges that as a broker with Independent Insurance Services, it may be easier for him to find referrals than for some of his chapter colleagues, but he added: “You still have to be constantly proactive and alert to find quality referrals, and I take great care to ensure that each one I pass has been properly validated and is never duplicated. Frankly I've never thought about the numbers; I've just focused on how I can find more business for my colleagues.”

As immediate past chapter director, Ray (pictured below) is delighted with the chapter's progress and says his own experience is a perfect example of Giver's Gain. He said: “I may have passed plenty of referrals over the years, but I've also received a lot of extra business through my BNI colleagues so it's very much a two-way process. Every member of the chapter plays a full part in our overall success.” ●

Contact Ray on 01303 221 188.



Anne Cheats Death to WIN Top Business Award!



Less than three years after she was told she had barely a 50/50 chance of surviving cancer, Kent marketing guru Anne Ray has won a coveted award as the county's 'Entrepreneur of the Year' – and thanked BNI for helping her to make an amazing business comeback!

Diagnosed with advanced colon cancer, Anne not only survived major surgery and extensive chemotherapy, but prospered through her newfound lease of life, first being shortlisted for Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce's 'Entrepreneur of the Year' award 12 months ago, and this year seeing the marketing and training company, 'Achieve' (which she set up while in remission from the disease), win the title.

At the same time, Anne (pictured left) joined BNI's Canterbury Chapter and, despite being told she would have to wait up to three years before knowing if she'd finally beaten cancer, she was determined to fulfill a lifetime's ambition to run her own business. "It was a scary time, but the great thing about surviving a life-threatening situation is that it fills you with renewed positivity, and I now make the most of every minute.

"When I launched 'Achieve' I got great support and encouragement from my BNI colleagues, and as the business grew – a significant amount coming from chapter referrals – I also found there were increasing requests for me to organise business development workshops ('The Entrepreneur's Secrets') that I now regularly

run for companies across the whole business spectrum.

"Unlike many training consultancies, we identify the one or two factors that will best enable a client's business to grow rapidly, and then show them how to deliver results. In this context, my personal experiences have been invaluable in defining what really matters because, when you've faced the prospect of dying, life's other problems pale into insignificance. With this restored sense of perspective, I can genuinely reassure my clients that there is always a solution to every problem," she added.

Anne was given the all clear last year, but not before she'd twice taken 'round the world' holidays, and she then celebrated the news by taking part in a gruelling charity trek along the Great Wall of China, raising £3,000 for Breakthrough Breast Cancer. Travelling the globe is now becoming a routine part of her life as demand grows for her presentations as a motivational speaker – one of which will see her visit Kuala Lumpur next Spring, to address the international BNI members' conference (see story page 4).

By happy co-incidence, Anne's recent business recognition was emulated by one of her own clients (and fellow chapter member), Trevor Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Jewellers who won the Chamber of Commerce's 'Excellence in Customer Service' Award, beating several major PLCs to top spot. ●

Contact Anne on 01227 456258 and Trevor on 01227 767206.

... while Norman's Fighting Florist Conquers All

At the age of 40, Mary Murray seemed to have it all. Married, two children building bright futures and a high-flying marketing career, there was little she needed to complement a rewarding lifestyle.

But life is rarely that certain, and everything changed for Mary when, shortly after the unexpected death of her husband, she developed severe headaches and, after a worrying year of misdiagnosis, was found to have Lupus, the auto-immune disorder. Despite treatment, her headaches grew worse until, a year later she had an MRI scan which revealed a large tumour in the centre of her brain.

Although non-malignant, its discovery marked the start of a painful and life-changing decade, during which Mary underwent seven major neurological operations, spending countless months in hospital, contracting life-threatening infections like meningitis and then becoming epileptic. "Even when I was allowed to return home, nothing was the same. I could barely walk, wasn't allowed to drive, and my memory had totally disappeared, so I had to give up my career and just sat at home. I was a living cabbage," she recalled.

Luckily, Mary had retained core personal strengths including her fighting spirit and determination to overcome adversity. She said: "Having survived so many episodes of high-risk surgery and new health problems, I

wasn't prepared to sit there feeling sorry for myself and decided I needed a new challenge to give me a renewed purpose in life."

So, between prolonged periods of hospitalisation, she took up a floristry course with the simple aim of pursuing a hobby and gently easing herself back into society. One day, while being driven home by another girl on her course, they dropped in at a florists' shop where the girl was a trainee. "I thought to myself 'I could do this, given half a chance....'

Fortuitously, Mary's son acquired a florists' shop in Norwich, retaining its staff and enabling her (in her own words) "to go along once or twice a week to play with the flowers." But that was never going to be enough and, after honing her floristry skills, Mary took a dual plunge in 2004 – first by buying out another successful Norwich florist and weeks later joining the city's Norman Chapter.

Three years on, Mary now runs one of Norwich's most successful florists (employing seven staff) and her BNI membership is paying dividends in the form of referrals to valuable corporate clients. "This alone ensures I want to keep my seat at the chapter's breakfast table but what has proved even more useful is the regular contact with like-minded business people. Floristry can be a lonely business, so it is

very therapeutic to share ideas and experiences with other entrepreneurs, knowing there is always a group of colleagues willing to offer their moral and professional support."

Despite being one of the chapter's more outgoing members, it wasn't until Mary delivered her latest 10-minute presentation a few weeks ago, that many of her colleagues learnt for the first time about her amazing 'return' to the commercial world. "That's one more thing BNI has given me," she added, "... the confidence to present myself boldly. Having come back from the dead – in both a personal and business sense – I'm bound to live for today, and I have a lot of living to catch up on. BNI is playing a significant role in my personal regeneration!" Mary is pictured above (left) receiving a regional business award. ●

Contact Mary on 01603 623141 or 07740 530 166.



BNI Speeds Up Dean's Travel Plans

When travel and holiday specialist Dean Wilson gave up a good job as a manager with Thomas Cook two years ago to fulfil a long-term promise of working for himself, he started his new travel agency venture with no money, no clients and no real idea of how long it would take him to become successful.

Today, Dean has just appeared on an international TV webcast at the invitation of the award-winning Travel Counsellors franchise organisation to tell hundreds of fellow travel consultants how he has become one of the top performing franchisees in less than two years – and encourage all of them to join their local BNI chapters if they want to follow in his footsteps!

Dean recently became one of just 70 out of more than 800 Travel Counsellor advisers around the world to be awarded the company's prestigious Gold status and took part in an exclusive conference for capital gold counsellors in South Africa. He says his achievement has only come about because of his decision to join Liverpool's Eagle Chapter at the same time he branched out on his own in 2005.

He said: "I'm sure there were more than a few of my travel industry colleagues who wondered what I was doing when I forfeited the relative security of being a Thomas Cook manager to start my own business with Travel



GOLD PERFORMER: That's Dean Wilson

Counsellors, but this organisation has a very good reputation and I felt that if ever I was going to go out on my own, now was the time to do it. So I took the plunge and, knowing that the biggest challenge was to find new customers quickly, I applied to join BNI at the same time."

In fact it took Dean even less time than he expected before new customers started flowing in – nearly half of them coming through his Eagle Chapter colleagues and other BNI members. "During my first year in business, between 40 and 50% of all my new business came through BNI and not just from my colleagues around the breakfast table – even if I did book the holidays for nearly all of them!" he joked.

"Since then, well over 50% of my total business turnover has originated from BNI referrals so, very clearly, I would have struggled to reach anything like the degree of success I've enjoyed without BNI membership – let alone gain gold status with Travel Counsellors, which is based purely on the volume of turnover achieved," he added.

So it was no surprise that when Dean was invited last month to appear on Travel Counsellors' own TV webcast to talk about his rapid rise to gold status, he had one key message for his fellow agents watching around the world, in South Africa, Germany, Australia, Holland and the UK: "If you want to increase your turnover substantially, you should join your nearest BNI chapter right away. I'd encourage every Travel Counsellor franchisee to become a member because, if you embrace the BNI philosophy, you'll most definitely gain more business," he told his viewers.

Of the 700-plus Travel Counsellors in the UK, around 70 are already members of BNI chapters, but Dean added: "Without BNI I would not have made it. It's as simple as that. So any of my travel colleagues still wondering whether they should join, need look no further than my success story." ●

Contact Dean on 0845 058 7242

Merja Gallops Towards Olympic Dream With a Little BNI Help!

In more than two decades, BNI has helped hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world to achieve their business and personal goals, but rarely, if ever, has it played a key role in steering one of its members towards their dream of winning an Olympic medal!

But that's the unique opportunity for Dun Laoghaire's Forty-foot Chapter whose members have just seen colleague, Merja Sumiloff-Phillips enjoy a successful first appearance at a major international horse show with her Hunter mare, Lady Fay - taking two 'third' placings against top international riders at the Dublin Horse Show - largely thanks to the sponsorship and support she's received through her chapter.

An alternative health therapist, Merja

runs Holistic Massage Services from her base in Monkstown, Dublin County and it is thanks to the burgeoning business she has received through BNI membership over the past year, that she's been able to find the resources to compete in bigger equestrian events in the hope of moving up the rankings and being able to represent her native Finland at the 2012 Olympics in London.

She said: "BNI played a big part in my getting these results in the Dublin Horse Show. It is very expensive to compete in equestrian sport and, without the huge number of referrals resulting in a lot of extra income for my business, I simply couldn't have completed at this level. In addition, the encouragement and support of BNI colleagues together with the sponsorship I've received through BNI

have been a crucial part of my success so far.

"If I'm to meet my Olympic goal, I will have to find increased sponsorship, so I'm going to be even more reliant on my BNI colleagues to help me find enough extra business and some sponsors in the coming months. Considering I only bought my horse in January, we've done remarkably well in our first season. Lady Fay was voted best filly in class at her first Dublin show, so I'm hoping my colleagues will think we're a good bet for 2012, and keep up their fantastic support!" she added. ●

Any BNI member interested in following Merja's eventing career can contact her on +353 868 951726 or at msumiloff@gmail.com

MEMBERS GO GARDENING TO CULTIVATE SUCCESS

Over the years, while countless BNI members have raised their business profile, and that of their local chapters, through various enterprising PR and publicity initiatives, our green-fingered experts have taken something of a back seat. But no longer, as two of our most creative gardening specialists turned up trumps with a couple of truly original ideas...



GOLDEN GARDEN: Garden design expert Adrian Crowe relaxes in Colchester Centurion Chapter's award winning garden. Photos courtesy of Alan Hughes Photography (Centurion member)

Centurion Members Get Busy Growing BNI'S Profile

With an important show garden to prepare at the world-famous Chelsea Flower Show, it probably wasn't the best time for Colchester Centurion Chapter's garden designer, Adrian Crowe, to suggest that members boost the group's profile by entering East Anglia's largest charity garden show.

"With hindsight, it was an insane idea," said Adrian of Crowe Garden Design, "but when I floated the concept of Centurion entering its own show garden at Essex's Little Bentley Garden Show, everyone thought it was a good idea, and I hadn't really considered the implications of putting it together in

barely 10 weeks, when I was already heavily committed in London."

Adrian's Chelsea garden was awarded a prestigious Silver gilt medal, giving him and his Centurion colleagues just four days to complete the design and building of the "Centurion Garden – A Room with a View". He said: "With so many BNI businesses working on our entry, it suddenly occurred to me that if we failed to do well, the whole initiative could backfire and, far from creating a positive profile for BNI – which was the whole purpose – it might leave us with egg on our faces."

In the event, thanks to great teamwork among his colleagues (whose contributions included graphic design, printing, photography, IT, and the provision of materials and transport), Centurion Chapter's garden proved a show stopper, winning a coveted Gold award and dramatically raising both the chapter's and BNI's profile through numerous radio interviews, newspaper articles and post-show publicity.

Adrian added: "The weekend also offered an entirely new slant on team building. With the show judged by top Royal Horticultural Society judges, there was tremendous pressure to deliver for all the BNI member businesses involved, so the outcome produced a huge sense of achievement for everyone involved." ●

Contact Adrian on 01787 228 147 or at: adrian@crowegardensdesign.com

A 10 Minute Presentation with a Difference!!

When your profession is garden design and the results of your expertise are often laid across acres of open space, it's not terribly easy to demonstrate your skills to chapter colleagues. But when garden specialist Maxine Nelson came to deliver her latest 10-minute presentation to members of Leeds' Network Central Chapter, she was determined to make an impact and be noticed!!

"Of course, I dug out all my previous design work which had been printed on A1 sheets and wallpapered our breakfast meeting venue with colourful examples of my work, and I also had models and plans of recent projects including before and after pictures, so my colleagues could see the true impact of my designs. But the human element was still missing, so I hit on the idea of involving some of my own clients in my presentation," said Maxine.

The results provided the 'wow' factor that Maxine wanted, with two of her happy clients attending the meeting to deliver their own powerful words of praise during her talk, while another half a dozen testimonials from satisfied customers were read out by some of Maxine's chapter colleagues, adding independent, personalised endorsements to her professional Powerpoint presentation.

"It meant that my fellow members heard and saw real feedback from my customers, rather than just getting my own views, and it seemed to work because afterwards I received very positive feedback from my BNI colleagues members about the passion I showed for my work. Some said it was the best 10 minute presentation they'd seen," she added.

Maxine also stressed the importance of working closely with members offering related services in neighbouring chapters. "In West Yorkshire we have an effective gardening



and horticultural power circle called COGS (complete garden solutions), and it was good to see COGS member Mark Coulson from Hallmark Plants – a member of Doncaster Chapter – coming to listen to my 10 minute presentation. It is this kind of mutual interest and support that will see members from different chapters working together more often, and sharing bigger and more valuable referrals." Maxine is pictured above (second from right) with some of her clients. ●

Contact Maxine on 07855 824 224 or at: maxine@gardensbymax.co.uk



train & gain

CONFIDENCE & REFERRALS

(... or, How to instil confidence in people, so they'll want to help you take your business forward).

By Iain Whyte, Executive Director for South & East Scotland

A question most people should ask themselves is: 'What is the purpose of my business?' To which the answer should usually be: 'To acquire and keep clients profitably.' All of us are in business to make a profit – and even if you run a charity, you've got to make more money than you spend.

So, what have business referrals and confidence got to do with each other? Quite a lot, in fact. If people have no confidence in you, they won't tell other people about you (unless they're telling them to avoid you, and you really don't want that!).

Let's look at typical reasons why people might not have confidence in you:

- Someone's been telling bad stories about you.
- They weren't really sure what they wanted when they came to see you, and they're still not sure. (If you spot

this, you can get them to feel good about you by identifying with them just what they do want, and then helping them, or pointing them in the direction of someone who can help).

- Your goods or services are shoddy
- You haven't delivered on time
- You're charging more than you said you would

Of course, there are also more obscure, or perhaps psychological reasons. Perhaps they don't have confidence in themselves or their decisions, or maybe things are bad in their life right now and they are suppressing their thoughts ...and projecting their insecurities or anger onto you. Equally, it may be that you don't have confidence in yourself, your services or your products, and this is showing itself to your potential clients.

Confidence is a strange and sometimes nebulous thing. But you can gain confidence in yourself and in what you have to offer to others – and in doing so, you can make your prospects and clients have confidence in you. And if people have confidence in you they will:

- Buy from you ...
- And/or pass your name on to other people

So confidence can equal referrals. And referrals are worth their weight in gold if you act on them. •

**Confidence = Referrals
= £££ for you**

Peter Hits 5,000 and Drives Off in NEW CAR!

Members of Kingston upon Thames' Coombe Wood Chapter have just passed an important milestone by notching up their 5000th business referral, and using the occasion to recognise several of the group's top performers.

Man of the moment was vehicle repair boss Peter Eyles, managing director of A.C.K. Automotive Services in Ripley who had no idea that the referral he'd just passed to the chapter's picture framer, Paul Webb represented such an auspicious landmark.

However, if it hadn't sunk in immediately, it certainly did when he was presented with the keys to a brand new Volvo Coupe convertible to

drive for a week – a 'prize' offered spontaneously by one of the chapter's visitors - Nick Webbe, the Corporate Sales Manager of Squire Furneaux Volvo. Nick was visiting Coombe Wood as a guest of membership co-ordinator, Simon Barr, who said: "I knew we were going to reach 5,000 on the day, and suggested it might be good for Nick's business if he gave a prize to whichever member passed the landmark referral. Peter was delighted with it!"

Meanwhile, the chapter presented a bottle of champagne to its longest serving network member, Mr Ricki Montaut from RJM Glass, while two members who had passed the most referrals since the chapter started - Mamita



DRIVING FORWARD: Coombe Wood Chapter's Peter Eyles (second from right) receives the keys to a new Volvo from Nick Webbe, watched by Chapter Director Chris Griffin (left) and Membership Co-Ordinator Simon Barr.

Woodward from Chimera Design and Guy Fallows from Fallows and Company chartered accountants - were given tickets to a day of horse racing, courtesy of Kempton Park Racecourse. •

BNI'S BIG SECRET: The Law of Attraction



By Paul Clegg, Executive Director, Western

Chances are that you will have heard about "The Secret" or maybe you've even read it. Created by Australian TV producer Rhonda Byrne, The Secret is a philosophy for living, based on the idea that like attracts like, so if you think something good will happen to you, it will.



Not surprisingly, a film of The Secret has already been viewed by millions around the world, while it has also been released as a book and audio book with more than seven million copies in print. I am told that Dr Ivan Misner was filmed as a contributor. Sadly, his words of wisdom are still on the cutting floor but, as we all know, the best bits are always saved for the 'directors' cut'!

The Secret explains with simplicity the law that governs all our lives; in essence it says "we attract to ourselves in life and in business whatever we give our attention, energy and focus to, **whether negative or positive.**" The last four words are the key to understanding this concept.

Years of attending BNI meetings, especially when visitors are present, have led me to conclude that just three factors determine if a qualified visitor will put in an application. The Law of Attraction is at work in your BNI Chapter, whether negative or positive.

Let's start with the energy created within the chapter meeting, which visitors see from the moment they walk through the door.

What they see, especially when they often turn up at 6.30 on visitor days or 6.45 at any other time, is all important to the decisions

they will make about joining BNI.

Do they feel a positive energy or do they feel apprehensive as members drift in over the next fifteen minutes after them? Do they feel like an outsider, an outcast, as members chat with each other - or do the chapter's members show a genuine energy and enthusiasm for getting their guests involved and introducing them to others?

What energy is apparent in the way people are introduced, and the way members respond? The number of times I ask the question: "How are you?" and hear the reply: "Not bad" is far too many. 'Not bad' sends out the wrong message, since our subconscious hesitates to recognise the word 'not'. Ask me that question and I'll tell you that I'm either 'brilliant' or 'outstanding', so there's no mistaking what energy I'm adding to a room - even if deep down, I don't really feel at my best. Try saying that you feel 'brilliant' - along with giving an enthusiastic smile - and just see what reaction your energy creates. You'll like the response it produces.

Look around the room. What energy do your BNI colleagues contribute when they're 'on their feet' in the meeting?

Energy is created by each of us (negatively or positively) but something special happens when everyone is focused on creating positive energy, by arriving early, feeling brilliant.

Secondly, what is the focus of the meeting? Is it based on a professionally run, disciplined meeting geared to producing outside third party referrals? This doesn't mean the meeting has to lack humour, but is its focus designed to help your visitors understand how they can get more business?

Nothing supports this objective more than when members are very specific about the referrals they want. Positive contributions endorse this element at the "I have...." point on the agenda, because

it adds both energy and focus. Wimpy testimonials or a half-hearted vote of thanks to the ten-minute speaker sends out negative energy and dilutes the focus on contribution.

Which brings me to the third element, over which we have no control timing. Is the timing right for the visitor to commit?

Timing is everything and we have little influence over someone else's timing.

However, we do have influence over the quality of our post-meeting follow-up calls to our guests. Our task is to catch people when the timing is right for them and in this respect, follow up is everything.

More potential members (along with the business they can bring through referrals) are lost through the lack of effective follow up, than from anything else.

So, follow up with energy and anticipation in a timely manner and you will increase chapter numbers. And, remembering the basic philosophy behind The Secret, **expect** those you are calling to want to submit an application. Watch the law of attraction work for you.

You see, we're all drawn towards people with energy, people who know with certainty where they are going. I guess that is the Law of Attraction in play. ●

Paul Clegg can be contacted on 01225 436161.



Capital Members Produce a Double Winner!



A BNI 'career change' coach is celebrating after steering one of her clients to an incredible victory in ITV's recent "Best of Britons Awards".

Rachel Brushfield, who runs Energise in central London, and has been a member of its Capital Chapter for six years, helped frustrated advertising executive Duncan Goose to discover he wanted to leave the rat race and help the world's less privileged. It was a decision that led to previously 'unknown' Duncan winning ITV's prestigious national award for campaigning, placing him alongside famous winners including Dame Helen Mirren and David Beckham.

Duncan launched a mineral water called One Water (www.we-are-one.org.uk) with all the profits going to charity to buy 'Playpumps' for African villages on which children play, their rotational energy drawing water from the ground and providing it on tap for villagers who otherwise have to walk for up to five hours to the nearest well.

Before success took off, Duncan visited Capital Chapter where Rachel introduced him

to colleagues Chris Catchpole - who did the creative work for the brand - and Sam Grant, whose virtual PA service provided vital back-up for Duncan's embryonic business. Other Capital Chapter members are now giving their own time to help Duncan find more High Street outlets for his no-profit water.

He said: "Rachel helped me find what I really wanted to do. She has been instrumental in keeping me on track, championing me and helping me believe that my vision was possible, as well as identifying ways around the inevitable obstacles that have been in my path. She is responsible for all this - a coach to end all coaches."

Rachel added: "Duncan is a hugely modest and inspiring person. My role was merely to be the catalyst for what proved to be a double winner - helping him find his true vocation and seeing this lead to such a worthy outcome." ●

Contact Rachel on 0845 22 55 010 or at: rachel@energisingconnector.co.uk

BNI Members Spark IT Breakthrough

When London-based IT firm, Small Business Computing, joined BNI eight years ago, its directors simply hoped membership would lead to increased business through referrals. In fact, it has led to the firm launching a major new service that became an instant 'must have' for small to medium sized enterprises, and has seen the company 're-invent' itself with a new focus.

Celia Hyde, SBC's Commercial Director cheerfully conceded that while she became a member of Clerkenwell Chapter for the usual reason - to grow her business through referrals - she quickly discovered through her BNI colleagues that small businesses were crying out for an effective computer networking system at a price they could afford.

"Through my weekly presentations I became aware that many of my BNI colleagues had long wanted an easy, fast, reliable and affordable computer networking system for their businesses. Even more surprisingly, when

I discussed what seemed like an obvious need with my own team, we realised that no-one was offering an inexpensive, easily scaleable solution for small firms, many of whom needed access to sophisticated IT systems but couldn't afford the high premium," she said.

Without them knowing it, her colleagues' regular cries for help led Celia's company to develop a new hosted network service called "invisiserve" (www.invisiserve.com) - one of the first of its kind aimed at the needs of the SME market. Now, just months after its launch, it has spread like wildfire through the small business community.

Celia added: "It was only by listening to chapter colleagues that I realised many of their IT needs were not being met and so our new venture was born - proof that being involved with so many different types of business through BNI really can help people think outside the box." ●

Contact Celia on 020 7940 0003



SITTING PRETTY: Celia Hyde is enjoying the benefits of BNI membership

Eighty members and guests attended the inaugural Birmingham Gala Awards Dinner held at Warwickshire County Cricket Club last month - when a six-month-old chapter swept the board with two of its members taking the top three awards.

Despite being launched only last April, the Phoenix Chapter (based in Knowle, south Birmingham) beat half a dozen more established Birmingham chapters to take the top honours - two of which went to founder member Sarah Koymen, a director of Quintessential Print.

Sarah won the "Star Performer" award for her chapter and was voted "Regional Notable Networker", before capping a great night by also winning the top £100 cash prize in one of

the event's competitions - which she promptly donated to the Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs.

One of Sarah's Phoenix colleagues, Steve Gilbert, a project manager, took the award for the most outstanding 60-second presentation, in the face of strong competition.

Sarah commented: "In a very short time BNI has helped me develop both personally and in business, and naturally my business is growing even more successfully as a result. This was our first BNI awards event and the evening was a great success. I'm sure everyone will want it to become an annual event." ●

Our picture shows Sarah and Steve with their awards.

Phoenix Duo Take the Plaudits





KENYA BOUND: From left to right, Symphony Hotels directors Paul Shields and Mike Sheffield hand over their donation of crockery to the Balcraig Foundation's Karen McLeary, watched by Fair City Chapter's Secretary, Dennis Gardener

Fair City's Long Distance Wedding Partnership

Getting ready for another BNI 'big breakfast'? Not quite, but the above scene - captured at Perth's Fair City Chapter - had equally significant implications not just for its members, but for the residents of an orphanage 3,000 miles away on the outskirts of the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

Thanks to an amazing response from chapter members to a casual request by Secretary/Treasurer Dennis Gardener, the Thomas Barnardo House in Nairobi has become one of Africa's most sought-after wedding venues, much to the delight of the Perthshire-based charity that runs it.

Despite the Home's impoverished surroundings, the Balcraig Foundation discovered its playing fields, kitchens and reliable water supply were in popular demand as a wedding venue and, with typical Kenyan weddings attracting 500-plus guests, staff recognised its potential as a much-needed source of income.

However, the orphanage lacked nearly all the basic equipment needed to cater for such events, so Balcraig's appeals co-ordinator

Karen McLeary turned to Perth's high-profile BNI chapter for help.

Members donated a wide range of teaching, recreational and kitchen equipment, but the most welcome response came from Perth-based Symphony Hotels whose management stepped forward with a mountain of crockery including 1,000 plates, bowls, cups and saucers together with cutlery and serving dishes - and a deep fat fryer to provide chips for Barnardo's own youngsters.

The chapter meets in Perth's Queens Hotel, one of several owned by Symphony, whose group director Paul Shields said: "The appeal came at the perfect time. We'd just replaced a large amount of our crockery and were delighted to pass on the older stock to such a worthwhile venture."

Dennis added: "I mentioned the appeal almost as a throwaway item but it just seemed to hit the mark and members responded in amazing fashion. It just demonstrates yet another aspect of BNI's Giver's Gain philosophy." ●

From bedroom to boardroom Thanks to BNI

Like many newcomers to the BNI community, Glen Piggott's specialist marketing company was a home-grown affair - so much so that for the first few months after joining King's Lynn Vancouver Chapter, he continued to operate from the spare bedroom at home.

And, like many entrepreneurs, one of his aims was to grow sufficiently to warrant a move to tailor-made office premises. He just didn't expect it to happen so quickly after joining BNI!

Glen is Creative Director of Sound Wave Marketing, a Norfolk business that has grown so rapidly through his BNI referrals that it was able to celebrate winning this year's prestigious King's Lynn Mayor's Award (after being voted the area's Young Business of the Year), by relocating to new offices at Castle Rising in Norfolk.

He said: "When I joined BNI, I did not like to broadcast the fact that I and my small team were crammed into one bedroom of my house, and I hoped membership would speed the time when we could have a smart office address. I just didn't realise how fast it would come about, thanks to some fantastic referrals from my chapter."



"The main reason we won a top business award and were able to relocate much sooner than we expected, was because of our increase in clients and turnover - a major part of which stemmed from my chapter colleagues." ●

Glen, pictured above at his firm's inauguration of their new premises, can be contacted on 01553 633010 or visit: www.sound-wave.co.uk

BNI Makes The Living Golden for Funeral Planner

A family-run firm of funeral directors has gained a prestigious national award for its customer care - a reward that the company's boss attributes to what he's learnt through BNI membership.

John Whitehouse heads up Darlington-based Whitehouse Funeral Service which, despite being launched less than four years ago, has beaten several hundred other, longer established rivals to be voted 'National Funeral Planner of the Year' by Golden Charter Funeral Plans.

"I'm very happy to acknowledge that had I not joined Darlington's Walworth Chapter, this award would not have come to us. It is entirely the result of what I have personally gained from BNI in terms of its ethos and the valuable marketing and presentation skills I've acquired through my weekly chapter meetings and training workshops," he said.

John added: "Although the funeral service business is not haughty and aloof like it used to be, it can still be difficult to talk easily and openly to third parties about what we do, and of course, we need great tact and diplomacy in our daily dealings with bereaved relatives. That's where BNI has been of such great benefit, teaching me how to present different aspects of the business to other people, and giving me the confidence to talk about funeral planning with ease."

As the only funeral director member of BNI in the North-East region, John is in no doubt about the value of word-of-mouth networking to his business. He said: "With more and more people looking to open pre-payment funeral plans, personal introductions are vital and even after just two years of membership, I have been fortunate to gain considerable referrals



from my chapter colleagues. They have also helped raise the profile of my business, and awareness of the range of services we offer." John is pictured above with other members of the family-run business. ●

Contact John on 01325 482999 or at: enquiries@whitehousefuneralservice.co.uk

CONCORD CHAPTER PASSES 10TH WITH 20,000 REFERRALS!

With several of our oldest chapters marking their 10th birthday anniversaries with commemorative events, one such group in north-west London had an extra special reason to feel good this summer, having just passed its 20,000th referral – from one plumber to another!



The landmark referral was passed by Concord Chapter's heating and plumbing engineer Andy Brown to its plumber Brian Wall and was doubly significant since it confirmed the successful business synergy struck up between two similar trades within the same chapter.

Andy explained: "I joined Concord seven years ago and while it was good for my business, I received a lot of referrals for jobs that I did not enjoy doing – from unblocking pipes to installing new bathrooms, so I suggested that we could easily accommodate a traditional plumber who would have a ready source of referrals. Since I've earned an average of £50,000 worth of business through my chapter colleagues every year, I wasn't worried about competition. It's entirely thanks to BNI and Concord's members that my business has gone from strength to strength."

Three years ago, Brian applied to join and neither have looked back since. Although they both work in the same field, they specialise in different services and, because they complement each other so well, they are often able to pass referrals to each other. Andy added: "I'm frequently asked to fit bathrooms and do more conventional plumbing jobs for which I always recommend Brian, and he refers his

enquiries for new hot water and heating systems to me. We both pass and receive over 100 referrals a year – quite a few of them between each other."

Brian, who is renowned for his rhyming (and always different) 60 second informercials each week – even when he sends a substitute – added: "When I joined, I was obviously a bit concerned about having two people from very similar categories in the same group, but it has worked fantastically well and I was chuffed to be the recipient of this milestone referral."

Rickmansworth-based Concord Chapter had actually celebrated its own 10th anniversary a few months earlier – it was only the second BNI group to be launched in the UK back in the winter of 1996 – but members were determined to make a big splash about reaching such an impressive milestone, thanks to the creative efforts of the chapter's plastic products supplier Peter Phillips who produced a giant referral slip for the occasion. Our picture, courtesy of Concord member, Gary Batchelor Photography, shows Andy holding the oversized 'referral' with Brian. •

Contact Andy on 07802 468 535 and Brian on 07799 538 533.

TOP PERFORMING CHAPTER MARKS 10 YEARS OF SUCCESS

When you belong to one of BNI's top performing chapters, then reaching your 10th anniversary offers a perfect reason to raise the roof and shout about your achievements.

Which is why members of Canterbury Chapter have been enjoying the publicity limelight during the past few months, celebrating a decade of huge business success, during which time they have passed an astonishing £15 MILLION worth of business referrals between them – a feat says Kent Executive Director Robert French, that makes it the best performing chapter in Europe for the past 10 years.

For most of its existence, the Kent chapter

has had a membership comfortably in excess of 40 and its current 45-strong group is one of the most diverse in the UK with a very healthy balance of trades and professions including a martial arts teacher, an off-road driving tutor and a reflexologist.

Robert commented: "Canterbury was the first chapter in the UK outside London and throughout its 10 year history, we believe it has been the top European chapter in terms of the number of referrals passed."

Andrew Cowell, Canterbury's Chapter Director until last month added: "Many chapters enjoy periods of high level business activity, but our strength is that we've managed to sustain



and build on our performance year after year to the point where all of our members now take special pride in maintaining the chapter's unique status within BNI."

Our photo shows Andrew (third from left) with members of Canterbury's recently retired leadership team and BNI executive director Robert French (far left). •

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